Nova Scotia

ANNUAL REPORT

for the fiscal year
2000 – 2001

Advisory Council on the Status of Women

103-00422/

The Honourable Myra Freeman
Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia

Madam:

I have the honour to submit the report of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women for the period April 1, 2000, to March 31, 2001.

Respectfully submitted,

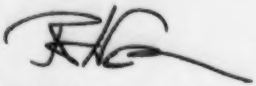
Jane Purves
Minister in Charge of Administration
of the Advisory Council on the Status
of Women Act

The Honourable Jane Purves
Minister in Charge of Administration
of the Advisory Council on the
Status of Women Act

Madam:

On behalf of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, I am pleased to present you with our report covering the period April 1, 2000, to March 31, 2001.

Respectfully submitted,



Rita Warner
Chair

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

During 2000–01, Council continued to act on its commitment to be inclusive as it deals with numerous issues affecting women in its programs and advice to government. Council's goal of inclusion is facilitated by the wonderful women who make up the Council. Council brings together the experiences of women of various backgrounds: women with disabilities, women who are black, lesbian, native, or single parents, and women from rural communities—women who can shape our direction as we strive to achieve equality, fairness, and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia.

As the first Cape Bretoner to be Council Chair, and as a woman from a rural community, I am very aware of the need for Council to represent the diverse perspectives of Nova Scotian women from all areas of the province, and I can draw on my own background and experience in working with women in rural Nova Scotia as I carry out my duties as Chair.

As I was elected chair in March 2001, I wish also to extend my own and Council's sincere thanks to our retiring Chair, Patricia Doyle-Bedwell, whose term on Council ended in July 2001. Ms. Doyle-Bedwell's work as Council Chair, a position she has held since 1996, has been an example and an inspiration. I know I speak for all of Council in thanking her and wishing her well in the future.

A challenge for Council over the past several years has been, and will continue to be, to bring more attention to issues affecting women's access to employment opportunities in non-traditional fields such as science and technology, as well as the growing information technology and oil and gas industries in Nova Scotia. Our continued association with the Association of Nova Scotia Women in Education and Research in Science (ANSWERS) and with Women in Trades, Technology, Blue Collar and Operations Occupations (WITTNS) has enabled us to address some of the barriers and obstacles women continue to experience in these fields.

Highlights of 2000–01

- Prepared for the Healthy Balance Research Program, which will explore the relationship between women's paid and unpaid work, empowerment, and health status. This successful $1.7 million five-year research proposal was developed in partnership with the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Dalhousie University, and the IWK Health Centre, along with researchers in eight universities, both local and national.

- Built on previous work with young women by participating in conference *Raising Voices, Channeling Energies II,* held in Yarmouth, May 2000.
- Responded to government's discussion paper *Towards Prosperity,* and received positive feedback on the quality of the input and the brief submitted by Council.
- Published *Money Matters*, the first in a series of statistical reports on women in Nova Scotia.
- Council recommendations for inquiries into the murder of Lori Lee Maxwell and the suicide of Bruce George resulted in reviews by the Departments of Justice and of Community Services, and in a review by Dean Dawn Russell of the Dalhousie Law School, that will make recommendations for the further development of the Justice Framework for Action Against Family Violence.
- Provided written input into proposed reform of the Police Act, with resulting positive media coverage.
- Co-sponsored two workshops on parent abuse: one for professionals, one for parents.
- Advocated for the removal of direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs and, as an environmental health protection issue, for the elimination of lawn pesticides.
- Supported the Black Women's Health Network through assistance in conference planning and implementation.

This year was also a busy one as we continued to provide input and advice to both federal and provincial governments on changes in legislation and programs affecting women.

During 2000–01 council wrote three briefs and made submissions on such issues as the proposed revisions to the Nova Scotia Police Act and gave input and recommendations on how best to include women in the economic growth of the province. Backed by research and written documentation, council's participation in these consultation processes has allowed me to bring forward women's equality issues on important and sometimes highly controversial areas of legislative reform.

As our mandate requires, council continues to represent as fully as possible the concerns and aspirations of equality-seeking women in Nova Scotia. We look forward to continuing our work as we enter Council's 25th year of serving the women of Nova Scotia.

Rita Warner
Chair

BACKGROUND

In April 1975, the Government of Nova Scotia appointed a seven-member Task Force on the Status of Women and instructed them to: study the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1970) with particular reference to those recommendations within provincial jurisdiction; report to the government on the status of women in the province; and recommend to government actions necessary to improve the status of women in Nova Scotia. This report is summed up in the publication entitled *Herself/Elle-Même* (1976).

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women was established in 1977 to advise the provincial government on issues of interest and concern to women and to bring those issues forward.

In 1996, the Women's Directorate merged with the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, strengthening organizational capacity in policy and research, information and education, community liaison and rural outreach.

The mandate of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women is defined by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act, which was first passed in 1977. The mandate and powers of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women are set out in Section 4 of the Act:

- to advise the Minister upon such matters relating to the status of women as are referred to the council for consideration by the Minister
- to bring to the attention of the Minister matters of interest and concern to women

The council has power to:

- receive and hear petitions and suggestions concerning the status of women
- undertake and recommend research on matters relevant to the status of women
- recommend and participate in programs concerning the status of women
- propose legislation, policies, and practices to promote equality of opportunity and status
- publish reports, studies, and recommendations

The council works to make sure that issues affecting the lives of Nova Scotia women become part of the government's plan. Our concerns touch all areas of women's lives, including paid and unpaid work, family life, health, education, legal rights, and experiences of discrimination and violence.

Council members come from across Nova Scotia and have been chosen for their interest and involvement in women's issues in their communities. Council meets up to five times a year. The Chair of the council is elected annually by council members. The Chair acts as the spokesperson for the council and reports to the Minister Responsible for the Administration of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act.

During 2000–01, council had a staff of seven in the Halifax office and three part-time field workers in other areas of the province. Staff provide administrative support for the work of council, information and communication services, rural outreach, and community liaison. Staff also maintain a resource library and field numerous requests for information and assistance on status of women issues from individuals, community groups, and government agencies.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Biographical information is current for the reporting period.

CAPE BRETON REGION

Patricia LeBlanc is a resident of Sydney with extensive community involvement and advocacy work. As a woman with a disability, she has been active in promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities. Ms. LeBlanc has served on the board of Community Involvement of the Disabled, holding various executive positions on the board over the years. She has also served on the board of the Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities. She initiated the start-up of the ACE Bowling League, the first bowling league for persons with cross-disabilities. Ms. LeBlanc represented post-secondary Nova Scotian students with disabilities on the board of directors of the National Education Association of Disabled Students from 1990–1994 and also served a two-year term on the NSAC on the Status of Women from 1996–1998 (Patricia Flynn). Patricia received her Bachelor of Business Administration Degree in 1993 from the University College of Cape Breton. Over the years, she has worked as a bookkeeper, researcher, office supervisor, enforcement officer and case aide.

Mary Sampson of Sydney joined the paid workforce as an instructor at the adult vocational training centre in Sydney after a 23-year career in homemaking and childcare. She later became a ward clerk at the Northside General Hospital, a position she held for 15 years. Ms. Sampson is a volunteer member of the Cape Breton Island Housing Board, which oversees the placement of applicants, the removal of clients, and the upkeep of housing units. She is also a skilled and experienced public speaker.

Rita Warner is a resident of Cape Breton with extensive career experience and community involvement. For the past 25 years she has held a variety of contract positions with such organizations as Inverness County Recreation & Tourism, Statistics Canada, MacDonald Hall in Inverness, and the Women Aware Women's Centre in Port Hawkesbury. Ms. Warner is skilled in program design and administration, project and group facilitation,

and promotions. She has been an active volunteer for a myriad of community organizations including Women Aware, the women's reference group to the Labour Force Development Board, Violence Against Women, Inverness County Literacy Board, the Purple Ribbon Campaign, and the Nova Scotia Tourism Association.

CENTRAL REGION

Dr. Linda Carvery of Halifax is an accomplished performer, singer, and entrepreneur with interests in the community and in economic and social development. She is past executive director of the African Nova Scotian Training Centre. Ms. Carvery has spent many years working in the community, particularly with persons with disabilities and families in crisis. She received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Saint Mary's University in 1998.

Patricia Doyle-Bedwell is a Mi'kmaq woman, a mother, a teacher, and a student. In 1993, she graduated from Dalhousie Law School as one of the first of five Mi'kmaq women to do so. In the past, she has worked in the areas of child welfare law and policy, land claims, and the criminal justice system. Main areas of interest are issues relating to aboriginal women. Professor Doyle-Bedwell is currently director of the Transition Year Program at Dalhousie University. Previously, she was an assistant professor of law at Dalhousie University and the acting director of the Indigenous Black and Mi'kmaq Program. She is a Justice Commissioner of the Mi'kmaq Justice Institute. She has represented the Central Region since 1994 and was elected Chair of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women in 1996, a position to which she was re-elected by council members in 1997 and 1998.

M. Chantal Richard is a lawyer in Halifax with Stewart McKelvey Stirling Scales. Before graduating from Dalhousie Law School in 1997, she spent time in the Dominican Republic and is the founding director of the Saint George School of Languages in Santo Domingo. Ms. Richard sits on numerous committees and boards.

FUNDY REGION

Sonja Power is a resident of Amherst and is a Correctional Officer with Springhill Institution in the Maximum Security Women's Unit. Currently, she is the President/Chair of the Board for the Amherst Association of Healthy Adolescent Sexuality and is an active member of the Springhill Institution's Women's Committee. Ms. Power has extensive volunteer experience in the corrections, victim support and healthy living areas. Ms. Power has held a number of term positions over the years as a counsellor, outreach coordinator, wellness coordinator, and project assistant with organizations of particular interest to women.

Shirley E. Jackson of Inglewood is a mother of four who works outside the home. She is very active in her community as a member of the Inglewood Community Club, the Inglewood Education Committee, and the Family & Children's Services of Annapolis County. She is the secretary for Annapolis to Kingston Black Community Development, a volunteer canvasser for various charities, and a volunteer typist for various community groups. Ms. Jackson has also served as secretary for both the Western Regional Alliance of Black Communities and for the Black United Front Council. Ms. Jackson has been working to save an orphaned and seemingly forgotten black cemetery outside the Annapolis Royal area.

HIGHLAND REGION

Doreen Paris of New Glasgow was employed with the Extension Department of St. Francis Xavier University. She is active in the Pictou County Women's Centre, and past president of Tearmann Society for Battered Women. She was provincial president of the African United Baptist Association Women's Institute, and received certification as a black legal advocate. Doreen's contributions to her community have been recognized by the New Glasgow Volunteer of the Year Award and the YWCA Women of Distinction Award. Ms. Paris also represented the Highland Region from 1994–98.

SOUTH SHORE REGION

Cheryl A. Bell is a resident of Conquerall Bank, Lunenburg County. She is married and has three teen-aged children. Cheryl's career, in the field of Administration, has given her experience in industry sectors such as manufacturing, transportation, Justice, Sport and Recreation, and Family and Children's Services. Cheryl's volunteer efforts through her community church enable her to work with Children and Youth. She has also been Treasurer for this group for approximately sixteen years. Cheryl has advocated on several occasions on issues involving the environment, fairness and equality.

Karen Field of Bridgewater has been a physiotherapist for more than 30 years, having received a diploma in physiotherapy from Dalhousie University in 1967. She has held a number of positions at hospitals in Cape Breton and on the South Shore. She was the director of physiotherapy at Dawson Memorial Hospital/South Shore Regional Hospital in Bridgewater from 1977–93. Since then, she has been with the Physiotherapy Health Services Association of South Shore. Ms. Field has demonstrated leadership in her profession over the years, having held a number of executive positions with her professional associations. She has also been an active volunteer in her community. Ms. Field also represented the South Shore Region from 1996–98.

Sheila Lewis operates a home-based pottery business in Yarmouth. She has been a member of BPW Yarmouth since 1985, is currently President of BPW Nova Scotia and sits on the National executive. Sheila is the recipient of BPW Canada's Woman of the Year for 2000. She has a strong interest in women and their economic stability and is Co-Chair of Women for Community Economic Development and the Tri-County Women's Centre. She was Chair of the Yarmouth Regional Business Corporation and is active in the Yarmouth Chamber of Commerce and Yarmouth Craft Guild.

MISSION, GOALS, AND CORE FUNCTIONS

OUR MISSION

To advance equality, fairness, and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia.

OUR GOALS

- To increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.
- To advise government on ways in which legislation, government policies, and programs can advance equality for women in Nova Scotia.
- To promote women's economic equality.
- To reduce violence against women in communities, workplaces, and families.
- To improve the health and wellbeing of women and their families.

OUR CORE FUNCTIONS

Research and Policy Development

The council advises the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women on the concerns and priorities of women, and formulates strategies and options to address these. The council conducts quantitative and qualitative research in consultation with community groups and government departments to ensure that its advice is a feasible, relevant, timely, and accurate guide to government action.

Information and Communication Services

The council collects and disseminates information on women's issues to the Minister, council, staff, and other key stakeholders, including the media and the public. Through a comprehensive communications strategy, council informs and influences key stakeholders about issues and concerns affecting women, council, and government priorities, activities, and accomplishments. Council also looks for ways to improve how women's issues are addressed.

Rural Outreach and Community Liaison

Through council members and fieldwork staff, the council brings forward concerns of women from across Nova Scotia, with particular attention to historically disadvantaged groups. Council also partners with communities, organizations, and agencies to advance equality for women in programs and services.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goal: Participation and Inclusion

Council works to increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities. It puts particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.

2000–01

Continued work with young women by partnering with L'Association des Acadiennes in planning a Francophone young women's forum and by participating in the young women's conference *Raising Voices Channelling Energies II*, held in Yarmouth in May 2000.

Promoted Professor Louise Carbert's research to identify barriers and opportunities for greater political participation by rural women, with a view to building on this work to develop women's leadership development program for implementation across the province.

Council Chair was invited to participate in Governor General's Study Tour of Canada, focusing her work on Canada's far northern communities.

Coordinator of Regional Services facilitated a session with the staff and students of Digby's training program for women on social assistance to enable resumption of the course after a walkout by the students.

Council hosted a successful event at Province House to mark the exhibition of the Famous 5 sculpture maquette, which was on a national tour before the unveiling of the Famous 5 sculpture itself on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

Developed and published, both in print and on the internet, a fact sheet on Nova Scotia suffragists and a quiz on Nova Scotian women for Women's History Month.

Supported *a capella* group Four the Moment's farewell tour through ad for program.

Participated in Human Rights planning for discussion paper to support organizational review.

The Executive Director participated in Canadian Policy Research Network dialogue on social values of Canadians. This was an invitational event which allowed placement of priority on social justice and equality values.

Produced draft of revised regulations for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women for council review and Ministerial and Cabinet approval.

Council's supportive relationship with the Girl Guides of Canada was recognized by a plaque in the foyer of new Guide Headquarters in Halifax.

Council's Regional Co-ordinator participated in the planning committee for Black Women's Health Conference.

The Advisory Council Chair sat on the Mi'kmaq Education Council and the Race Relations Committee of the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society.

Goal: Advice to Government

Council advises government on ways in which legislation, government policies, and programs can advance equality for women in Nova Scotia.

Council worked with the Department of Justice to develop an approach to a consultation regarding restorative justice and continued work on screening procedures for mediation.

The Executive Director participated in an expert focus group on gender-based analysis for Status of Women Canada.

Council advised HRDC on the establishment of an award to recognize firms with good work/life balance programs.

Council published its brief to government recommending changes to the Police Act (August 2000).

Council also successfully influenced legislative amendments to include adoptive as well as birth parents in extension of parental leave under provincial labour standards.

Goal: Economic Equality

Council works to promote women's economic equality.

Council responded to the government's discussion paper *Towards Prosperity*, receiving positive feedback on the quality of the input and the brief submitted by Council.

Council provided background data and advice to support the extension of maternity/parental/adoption leave to all Nova Scotian parents, allowing Nova Scotians to benefit from changes to federal legislation in this area.

Council continued its support of the Women for Economic Equality group and of the Interdepartmental Committee on Community Economic Development.

Council co-sponsored a conference in Amherst on the Maritime Provinces plastics industry, highlighting the opportunities for women in this field.

Council published the proceedings of its (2000) policy forum, *'A Woman's Work is Never Done' ~ Can Policy Value Caregiving?*

Council provided liaison and support to the Association of Nova Scotia Women for Education and Research in Science (ANSWERS), Women in Trades and Technology Nova Scotia (WITTNS), Women in Information Technology (WinIT), Techsploration, and the Hypatia Project. These activities keep Council abreast of programs to increase women's participation in science and technology careers, allowing Council to facilitate contact and co-operation among the groups.

Published *Money Matters*, the first in a series of statistical reports on women in Nova Scotia.

Goal: Eliminating Violence Against Women

Council works to reduce violence against women in communities, workplaces, and families.

Council's recommendations for inquiries into the murder of Lori Lee Maxwell and the suicide of Bruce George resulted in reviews by the Departments of Justice and of Community Services, and a review by Dean Dawn Russell of the Dalhousie Law School that will make recommendations for the further development of the Justice Framework for Action Against Family Violence.

Council provided written input into the proposed reform of the Nova Scotia Police Act, with resulting positive media coverage.

Work was begun on the third revised edition of *Making Changes: A Book for Women in Abusive Relationships*.

Co-ordinated December 6th flag-lowering ceremony.

Encouraged Department of Community Services to continue $500 funding for interagencies to carry out activities for Family Violence Prevention Week in February.

Goal: Improved Health and Wellbeing

Council works to improve the health and wellbeing of women and their families.

The biggest health-related project for 2000–01 was the preparatory work for the Healthy Balance Research Program. The Healthy Balance program's objective is to explore the relationship between women's paid and unpaid work, empowerment, and health status. This successful $1.7 million five-year research proposal was developed in partnership with the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Dalhousie University, and the IWK Health Centre, along with researchers in eight universities, both local and national.

Advocated for the removal of direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs and, as an environmental health protection issue, for the elimination of lawn pesticides.

Development work for province-wide campaign to distribute information to young women on Rohypnol ("date-rape drug"), in partnership with sexual assault centres, police, and drug dependency services.

Continued support of well women's clinics through community liaison and rural outreach program.

Council Chair (Patricia Doyle-Bedwell) continued her participation in research on the health needs of aboriginal women.

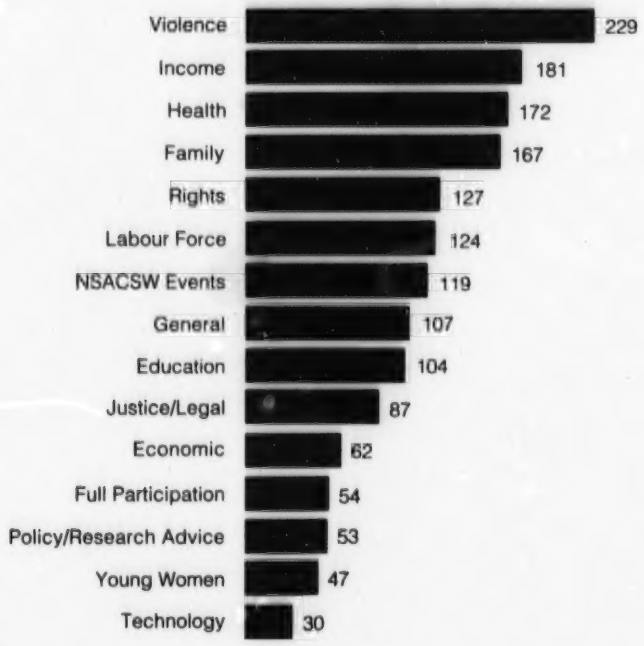
Supported re-establishment of Well Women's Clinic work by the IWK Health Centre, especially the continued access for women with disabilities.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION, ADVICE, AND ASSISTANCE

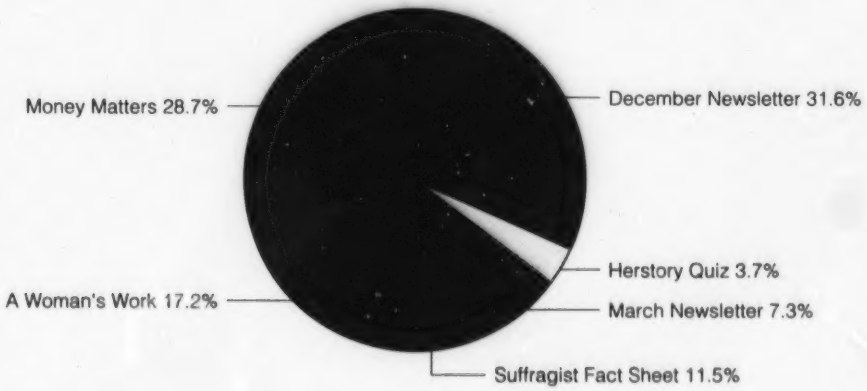
Responded to approximately 1,300 requests for information and referral, primarily via telephone. Received approximately 30,000 visits to our website between June 1, 2000 and February 28, 2001, with particularly heavy utilization of materials on woman abuse and family violence.

SUBJECT AREA OF REQUESTS MADE TO NSACSW

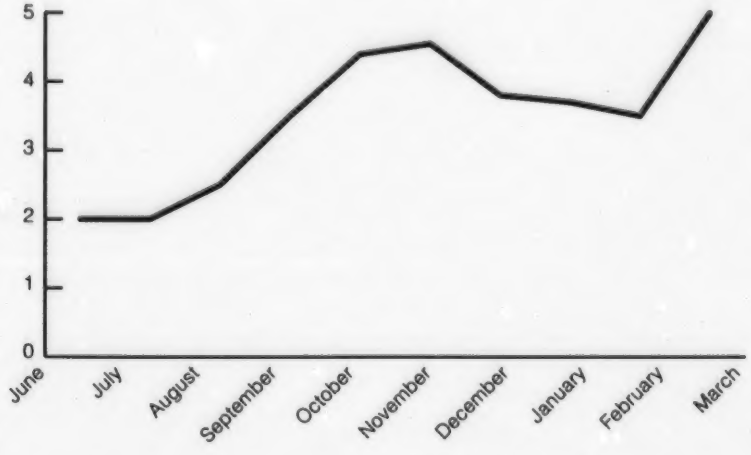
2000–01



PUBLICATIONS DOWNLOADED FROM WEBSITE
2000–01



PAGE VIEWS ON WEBSITE
2000–01



PUBLICATIONS 2000–01

In addition to its regular newsletter, fact sheets, and handouts, council published the following documents during the reporting period:

March 2001
Council's Plan of Action for 2001–02

March 2001
Highlights of Council's Year: 2000–01

March 2001
Money Matters
Part 1 of a statistical series on Women in Nova Scotia

August 2000
Recommendations for Revision of the Nova Scotia Police Act

July 2000
Annual Report for the Fiscal Years 1994-1998

July 2000
Including Women: Comments on *Towards Prosperity—A Discussion Paper on Developing an Economic Growth Strategy for Nova Scotia*

April 2000
Highlights of Council's Year, 1999–2000

March 2000
'A Woman's Work is Never Done'~Can Policy Value Caregiving?

April 2000
Highlights of Council's Year, 1999–2000.

In addition to the publications listed above, council published the following fact sheets during the reporting period:

March 2000
Unpaid Work: Some Selected Statistics

August 2000
Foremothers in Equality: Some Early Nova Scotia Suffragists

October 2000
Making History, Building Futures: Quiz for Women's History Month

March 2000 and December 2000
Newsletter, Women's Writes